

CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE LOCAL ADVISORY PANEL
TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

April 20, 2015—Chevy Chase Village Board Report

Membership:

Our panel is now at full strength of seven and consists of: Gail Feldman, Myra Kovey, Mark Nadel, Helene Sacks, Betsy Stephens, Peter Wellington, and Tom Bourke.

Background:

In 1998 the County Council designated the “Chevy Chase Village Historic District” as the area generally bounded by Cedar Parkway on the west, Grafton Street on the south, Brookville Road on the east, and Bradley Lane on the north. Exterior changes there require an Historic Area Work Permit (“HAWP”) in addition to a normal building permit which may also be required. HAWPs are reviewed by the County’s Historic Preservation Commission (“HPC”), which meets every two weeks. Our Local Advisory Panel (“LAP”) provides community input to the HPC, which is legally required to give “considerable weight” to our recommendations. Therefore, strictly speaking, the LAP is not a Village committee; rather it is an advisory group for the County HPC.

Philosophy:

Our members are very mindful that part of our goal is to mitigate a sometimes cumbersome process for the residents. We have generally found that the HPC and the County Staff who prepare the reviews are very professional, but tend toward stricter control. There have been no instances in recent memory where a majority of the LAP felt Staff was too lenient. We also know that the Village Board has traditionally been concerned that the county process may infringe on the judgments and preferences of the residents. Therefore part of serving on the LAP is recognition that we place a high priority on promoting compromise and flexibility.

Our Operating Procedures:

The HPC meets twice per month; therefore the LAP is on a very tight, bi-weekly schedule. We receive a county staff report and must provide our input within a matter of days; so we review and provide input through an exchange of emails. We usually agree within our LAP, but if not, then we report our divergent views to the HPC. In the interest of transparency, all of our email is automatically cc’d to the Village for archiving. These emails are available to Village residents for review.

Current Work:

When the HPC meets there are almost always one to two items on the agenda for Chevy Chase Village. Since our last Board report in April 2014, we have reviewed 18 projects – which is a relatively low amount, but a modest increase over 2013-4. Over the past year most cases have moved through without major problems, and many are given “Expedited Approval” by Staff. Residents seem to be more aware of the need to submit applications for HAWPs, and our overall sense of the HPC staff is that they may be becoming less strict – permitting new windows (provided they are simulated divided light), less involved in hardscape alterations, rear additions etc. We also held an information meeting last May in the Village Hall, with presentations by the HPC staff regarding the HAWP application process for alterations, and regarding the tax credits that are available for certain types of alterations and maintenance performed on properties in the Historic District.

Submitted on behalf of the LAP by its chair: Thomas K. Bourke, 36 Quincy St.